

COMMENT ON THE WEEK

America, Aug 14, 1943

High Finance. The publication, on July 31, of the revised budget estimate for the fiscal year 1944 reveals relatively small changes from the original estimate of last January. The expenditures for war activity remain the same—\$97,000,000,000—although the War Department is going to spend \$6,000,000,000 less than was contemplated, and the Navy Department \$4,000,000,000 more. The public debt as of June 30 stood at \$137,000,000,000, and the interest on this—\$2,700,000,000—is now the largest peace-time item on the budget. The total non-war costs of the Federal Government are estimated at \$4,340,820,000, bringing total Federal expenditure for fiscal 1944 to \$104,040,820,000. On the credit side of the ledger, the revised budget seems slightly more hopeful than the January estimate. It was thought then that total receipts would not exceed \$33,000,000,000, but now the Treasury expects to collect \$38,147,945,000. This represents a gain of five billions, and is accounted for by the fact that the individual income tax is going to yield much more than was expected. If no new taxes are enacted, the deficit this year will be \$69,000,000,000, bringing the total national debt on June 30, 1944, to the astronomical sum of \$206,000,000,000.

Taxes and Savings. In announcing the revised budget, the President stated the obvious truth that an expenditure program of such magnitude "must be backed up by a revenue program of sufficient size to make sure that we do not disrupt our home front and that we do prepare the way for an orderly transition to a future peace economy." To this end he repeated his demand of last January for "a truly stiff program of additional taxes, savings, or both," since only in this way can the excess purchasing power in the hands of consumers be prevented from bidding up prices and encouraging the growth of black markets. Comparative figures on income-tax rates in the United States, Canada and Great Britain, released last week by Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau, suggest that we can pay higher taxes without undue hardship. For a married person with no dependents, the tax on a \$2,000-net income in Canada is \$231; in Britain, \$378. Here it is \$188. Britain is meeting 51.7 per cent of the costs of Government by taxes; Canada, 47.1 per cent. But we are paying only 35.8 per cent by taxation, and borrowing the rest from individuals, institutions and banks. There is no doubt that a "truly stiff program" of taxes must be adopted at once if we are to escape an uncontrolled inflation, either now or in the immediate postwar period. The only doubt is whether Congress will vote such a program. Commenting on the President's budgetary statement, Senator George, head of the powerful Senate Finance Committee, said that

"next year, being an election year, there will be no tax act." If Senator George is a good prophet, the responsibility for a runaway inflation will rest squarely on Congress.

Bombing of Hamburg. On the night of August 3, the Royal Air Force again bombed Hamburg "in great force." Before this attack, the RAF and our Eighth Air Force had raided Germany's second largest city eight times in nine days, dropping on it a larger tonnage of bombs than fell on London during the entire eleven months of the Nazi blitz in 1940-41. According to a dispatch from Stockholm, Hamburg police estimated at 30,542 persons the dead, wounded and missing, but a Danish consular official resident there suggested that the raids had killed 200,000 Germans. This guess was regarded with skepticism in London, although the Air Ministry admitted that practically every section of Hamburg's fifty square miles was pocked with ruins. The factories and docks of Hamburg are, of course, a military objective. Everyone understands that, just as everyone understands that in this highly mechanized war a factory is just as much a military target as a front-line trench or an artillery emplacement. But the question ought to be asked: Are the whole fifty square miles of Hamburg a military objective? Our President has said that he does not believe in reprisal bombing; that bombing ought to be confined to military objectives: and in this position all civilized men will agree with him. Any other attitude would be immoral and contrary to the high ideals for which we fight. With all due regard to the judgment of our military leaders, we wonder, as we follow the progress of air war over Western Europe, whether the mass raids on Hamburg square either with God's law or the nobility of our cause.

War Strategy. For months Germany has worked to pry apart the Allied Nations. Today the shoe is on the other foot, as Italy seethes with cries for an end to the war. Germany is on tenterhooks, in search of guarantees against a most unfavorable turn in affairs in the whole Italian half of the Axis. Somewhere in London or Washington, sharp-eyed generals scan anew the lines on their war maps, for the defection of Italy in this sudden fashion has thrown open to them an unusual strategic opportunity for pressing Germany, now off balance and exposed to surprise attack on every side. Meanwhile Edward L. James, foreign editor of the *Times*, in his weekly review, tucks away a tiny suggestion about Russia's readiness to press forward her purposes, as Italy staggers. "It would be perhaps unfair to Moscow to hint that Stalin has anything to do with it, especially since the Comintern has been dissolved, but there are evidences that Communists

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members, and it is difficult to see how they would consent to activities of that type. The committee's findings have too much the appearance of an attempt to shift all the blame to the minority-group side of the fence, to enable the matter to be laid at rest. A grand-jury investigation would seem definitely to be in order.

Total Warfare. Strange how quickly shocking things become casual things. There was horror aplenty over the early bombings of the war, fierce denunciations of the barbarity that could kill unarmed thousands, drive thousands more into flight from home and town and city. Today we casually announce similar bombings with destruction of entire cities, thousands slaughtered, millions on the road. It is just a part of war and we shrug it off. The first bombing of Rome startled the world, evoked reams of comment pro and con. The second bombing was still headline news. Future bombings, should they come, will be but casual things. Early in this war Paris declared itself an open city and Paris was bypassed by the invading army, by-passed unbombed and unshelled. Manila was declared an open city and fierce indignation flooded our press when some few Japanese bombs fell on the city after the declaration. Today Rome would declare itself an open city. Whether or not the declaration is sincere, whether or not the conditions stipulated by international law are being fulfilled is a question to be answered sincerely by those who know. But what of the cynical remark of one of our most highly respected columnists that in a total war there can be no such thing as an open city? It would be a terrible thing if we were to become a shock-proof people. Still more terrible were we to adopt the attitude that this is a total war and in total warfare everything goes.

All This Health and Vigor. The birth-control advocates are ready with a new twist, in their periodic attempt to prove that the extinction of the human race will make humanity healthy, wealthy and wise. This time Dr. Logan Clendening's widely syndicated medical column quotes "World Index of Health and Vigor," prepared by Dr. Ellsworth Huntington of Yale University. New Zealand is listed first in the index with a "health and vigor mark" of 100; followed by the Netherlands, 98; Australia, 98; Norway, 97; Sweden, 96; and ending with India, 45. The "birth-control" nations, obviously are on top. Very much to the point, the press bulletin of the Central Verein inquires: "Is it merely a coincidence that the leading countries without exception are the nations doing the least to preserve their leadership by insuring their continuance? For example, New Zealand may be listed at 100, but it is rapidly approaching extinction." Countries now of a "size where all can be fed," may soon be "huge, practically empty countries." Careful analysis shows that the conclusion is exactly the opposite of that sought for by the birth-controllers, that "health and vigor are only temporary in dying countries." Birth control has placed a seal of decline upon the nations of the western world.

MESSAGES to friends and relatives in enemy-occupied territories may be sent through the Vatican Service, in much the same manner as through the International Red Cross. Message-slips for the twenty-five-word communications may be obtained through the Apostolic Delegation at Washington, D. C.

► Interest of the Church in war-relief activities, both now and for the period of reconstruction, is high-lighted again by the appointment of the Very Rev. Patrick A. O'Boyle as Executive Director of the War Relief Services, N.C.W.C. As a leader in the field of Catholic social work, Msgr. O'Boyle is well qualified to succeed the Most Rev. Bryan J. McEntegart, recently consecrated Bishop of Ogdensburg.

► The Pope's anxiety over the plight of the Jews is further revealed by an exchange of cables between the Vatican and the Archbishop of Mexico, the Most Rev. Luis M. Martinez. Urged by the Greek Consul in Mexico, the Archbishop begged the Holy Father's "charitable intervention" on behalf of the Bulgarian Jews. The reply stated that the Holy See "has been actively concerned with the Jews of other nations," and that it is also taking account of the Jews in Bulgaria.

► Italian Bishops have been credited by the Vatican Radio, according to a *Religious News Service* dispatch, with preventing bloodshed and violence at the fall of Mussolini. Cautioning that "the very serious situation brought about by the late government cannot be suddenly and radically remedied," and recommending discipline and respect for order, the Bishops have thus far saved Italy from revolution, thus facilitating future occupation by the United Nations.

► Carrying out in practice the Pope's solicitude for the welfare of all war prisoners, the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, the Most Rev. Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, has visited five such camps in widely scattered portions of the country. Everywhere he was received with great pleasure, and with signs of gratitude for the Holy Father's interest. The Apostolic Delegate expressed himself well satisfied with the material and spiritual care of the prisoners.

► Three more Chaplains are to be added to the honor-roll of those who have given their lives in the service: the Rev. Valmore G. Savignac, of the Diocese of Providence, lost when the ship in which he was traveling to an Army post was torpedoed in the North Atlantic; the Rev. Neil J. Doyle, of the Hartford Diocese, who died of wounds received as he accompanied troops into action in the Pacific area; and the Rev. William A. Irwin, of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, who died in London.

► A cable from London, reported by the *Religious News Service*, states that 1,200 German priests and Religious have been interned in Bavarian concentration camps, because of fomenting the strong anti-Nazi and anti-war movements which are growing in that preponderantly Catholic section of Germany.